

Mobile home eviction law too late for Bontivilla Trailer Park residents

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An extra three days would have meant an extra six months.

The residents of Bontivilla Trailer Park received 90-day eviction notices Friday.

On Monday, a new law took effect requiring mobile home park owners to give nine months' notice and to not increase rent.

"I think it's pretty good timing for the mobile home park owners, and lousy timing for the tenants," said Utah Rep. Phil Riesen, the Holladay Democrat who sponsored House Bill 48 to help ease the hardship of an eviction on people with fixed incomes. "It sounds like it was a calculated move."

But the eviction notices were supposed to have gone out earlier, and were only ready last week, said Brett Jensen, a partner with Ensign Development Group, which sent out the letter. "That's just the way the timing worked out."

Jensen's company is in the process of purchasing that land and plans to begin construction in mid- to late summer to develop it into a retail space.

He added that he and his business partners will meet this week to discuss residents' concerns, and whether to waive rent for these next three months. "[The eviction is] something that we want to make as easy as possible," he said.

Cliff Young doubts the owners will make anything easy.

He was sitting outside with his family until about 9:30 p.m. on Friday. When he stepped out to pick up the newspaper around 6 a.m. the next day, he saw the eviction notice taped to his window.

"I'm not crying my woe is me, but these people have no scruples and no integrity when they know this new law is going into effect and sneak in the middle of the night," Young said.

The disabled veteran has lived in his mobile home since 1984. About four years ago, his daughter and two granddaughters moved in with him.

While a "for sale" sign has been on the property for a few years, Young said, he remembers asking the current owners, Silver Creek Engineering, last year whether he would have to move out soon. According to him, they said nothing would happen within the next five years.

"They treat mobile home people like trailer trash," Young said, adding that he had hoped to straighten out his finances in those four years to buy a house. He added that the new law's extra six months would have at least given him a realistic amount of time to look for a new home.

The eviction is an added strain for Young; last week his daughter and granddaughter were in a car accident.

"It's been a rough six months for us, but this just tops it," Young said.

Several of the residents at Bontivilla live in campers and are planning to haul them to a different park. The other half live in mobile homes that are too old to relocate.

While Charlie Christensen can't move his home, he said he's lucky compared with his

neighbors. He has a camper stored in Castledale - "I'm gonna be OK."

It's the people like Francisca Sanchez whom he worries about.

Sanchez recently paid off the lease for her mobile home, where she's lived with her four children for the past year.

"Honestly, we don't know what we're going to do."

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